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THE BULLETIN OF THE CHINESE CULTURE INSTITUTE

ISSUE NO. 1

WINTER 1983

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHINESE CULTURE INSTITUTE

The Chinese Culture Institute originally started out as the Center for Chinese Arts and Culture (CCAC) which was established in April of 1979 under the auspices of the Chinese Economic Development Council (CEDC), a federally-funded agency. The CCAC's purpose, as defined by the CEDC, was to sponsor small-scale events and exhibitions to continue and promote the traditions of China for those Chinese-Americans separated from their native culture. However, through its active involvement in large-scale community-based events, and its outreaching to the artistic and educational communities in Boston, the CCAC's programming in the first year of operation exceeded the scope of the original plan, and attracted much attention and interest.

An effort to make Chinese cultural activities an active part of Boston's cultural agenda was initiated in late 1979 by Dr. Doris C. J. Chu, then Director of the CCAC, and Mr. Henry S. Lodge, then Vice-Chairman of the CEDC Advisory Investment Board and President of the Metropolitan Center (now the Wang Center for the Performing Arts). They were later joined by Mrs. Paul A. Schmid, Overseer of the Metropolitan Center, Mrs. Harris Fahnestock, Vice President of the Boston Symphony, Dr. David C. W. Chan, CEDC's Board member, Mr. John I. Taylor, President of the Affiliated Publications of the Boston Globe and Dr. Jerome Grossman, the president of the New England Medical Center. Through their efforts the Metropolitan Center and the Tufts-New England Medical Center jointly contributed 4,000 square feet of floor space, establishing a permanent and self-sufficient base for Chinese cultural activities. The space occupies 1,235 square feet on the street level adjoining the main entrance of the Wang Center, and 3,000 square feet on a lower level inside the Wang Center.

In December, 1980, the Institute was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the China Institute, a non-profit multi-purpose cultural institution. The name was changed to the Chinese Culture Institute to avoid confusion with the China Institute of America in New York. The In-

stitute then organized a Board of Trustees and Board of Advisors, whose members are prominent figures in Boston's artistic, political and business scenes.

With funds contributed by Dr. An Wang of Wang Laboratories, and the CEDC, the donated space was renovated into two art galleries. Display cases were purchased with a grant of \$4,000 from the Boston Globe Foundation. The renovation was completed by September, 1981, and was inaugurated as the China Showcase with the exhibition *East Meets West*. A gala banquet was held on September 21, 1981, to honor founding members and friends, and to commemorate the momentous occasion.



GOALS OF THE INSTITUTE

The goals of the Institute are to preserve and enhance the rich heritage of the Chinese culture, and to stimulate interest in and increase understanding of Chinese history, philosophy, literature, and art. In order to improve East-West understanding and communication, it is a further objective of the Institute to promote cultural exchange among the various ethnic groups across the nation, and, more specifically in the metropolitan Boston area.

PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

VISUAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES

One of the Institute's strongest programs has been in the visual arts and humanities. The objective of these programs is to present Chinese fine art and photography, as well as use visual or tactile approaches to presenting topics in Chinese and Chinese-American history and perception of East meeting West.

PERFORMING ARTS

The Institute is seeking to develop an active role in increasing presentations of Chinese performing arts and music in Boston, having been involved in the debut performance of a young conductor, Tu Hui-ming, and his chamber orchestra, and bringing the Chinese Classical Dance Company of Taiwan to Boston. The Institute hopes to become an active sponsor in bringing more such programs to Boston with an eye for introducing new Chinese talent as well as promoting appreciation of Chinese performing arts in Boston.

CULTURAL EVENTS

The Institute has and will continue to collaborate with other organizations in the Chinese community in planning and sponsoring traditional events, such as the Dragon Boat Festival or the August Moon Festival.

EDUCATION

The focus of the Institute's educational programs is on Chinese studies. These have included workshops and classes in Chinese painting, calligraphy, music, dance, and drama, and lectures and seminars on Chinese literature, history, philosophy, language, and art history. In addition, the Institute has had special lectures by visiting Chinese scholars. An important part of the exhibitions of particular significance will be the conducting of accompanying conferences and symposia.

Chinese children parade Chinatown at rally encouraging the purchasing of U. S. Savings Bonds during WWI.



Shoe making. Chinese workers in a shoe factory in North Adams, Massachusetts, 1870.

FREE CONSULTING SERVICE

Frequently, school teachers, college students and others telephone or drop in to seek advice regarding Chinese arts and culture. Questions range from those concerning folk customs to ones pertaining to Ch'an Buddhism, Taoist Philosophy or authenticity of certain Sung dynasty painting. The inquirers are always pleased with the answers, discussions or reference materials recommended to them.

OUTREACH

The Institute's Outreach Program includes lectures, slide presentations, and slide/tape presentations at high schools, colleges, and other organizations. Other aspects of the program are the planning and providing of art and humanistic exhibitions and various cultural activities.

NEWS BRIEF

LECTURES AND SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

During the past summer, our President, Dr. Doris C. J. Chu was invited to give lectures on various topics throughout New England. In August, she lectured on "The Contact of China and the West and the Evolution of Chinoiserie" at the Summer School Program of Middlebury College in Vermont; in July she was invited to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to speak on "Arts of China: A Survey." She also spoke on the history of Chinese immigration to the United States and the experiences and contributions of the Chinese in Massachusetts at the annual Asian Week Conference of the IRS and at the Asian Teachers Association of UMass Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges.

Glenn Braverman, CCI's Program Coordinator, presented a sample of our exhibition *Chinese in Massachusetts* at the 4th annual New England Artists Festival in Amherst. He also gave a slide presentation of the exhibit at the festival.

PAST EVENTS EXHIBITIONS

The CCI launched its art gallery with an exhibition entitled *East Meets West* (September 11, 1981 to December 11, 1981). Art pieces on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of the American China Trade, and the Peabody Museum of Salem, as well as private collections, were selected to reflect the fruit of the meeting of Eastern and Western cultures. The theme underscored the CCI's aim to promote East-West understanding and cultural exchange.

Fifty masterpieces by Tchan Fou-li were on display in an exhibition entitled *The Magnificent Landscapes of China* (December 9, 1981 to March 30, 1982). This internationally acclaimed photographer has received numerous honors and awards and was repeatedly listed in the top ten among photographers selected by international salons. His photographs were dramatic representations of the delicate beauty, the grandeur, the poetry, of Chinese landscape.

From April 2 to May 7, 1982, *The Spirit of the Brush* featured paintings by the renowned New England Chinese artist and teacher Sun Sheng-chia. The exhibition of 68 of Sun's masterpieces captured her artistic prowess in fusing the elusive poetry of the Southern Sung with the dense and finely-detailed Northern Sung.

The period between May 20 and July 30, 1982, saw *Bostonians in China: Views of the Land and the People*, an exhibition of China as viewed through the cameras of illustrious Bostonians visiting China's many regions on various occasions. Historical photographs were also displayed, selected from various Boston museum collections.

The exhibition that received the most attention and excellent notices from the media and the public was *Chinese in Massachusetts: Their Experiences and Contributions*, which was run concurrently with *Chinese of America: 1785-1980*, sponsored by the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco (November, 1982 to January, 1983). The former exhibition was funded in part by the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, and was researched and produced by the CCI.

Following that exhibit, was *Synthesis: Images of China and the West* (opened February 10, 1983), which featured the works of Maria Fang and Joanna Kao, two American-born Chinese artists. They were trained in America, but later went to China to continue their artistic preparation, and their exhibit was one of the fruits of their experience.

Finally, *The Children's Eye: Paintings by Children of All Parts of the World* exhibited from April 14 through May 30, 1983. These paintings were created by children aged 6 to 14, and presented the world through the refreshing, often surprising, and innocent perspective of a child.

WORKSHOP AND DEMONSTRATION

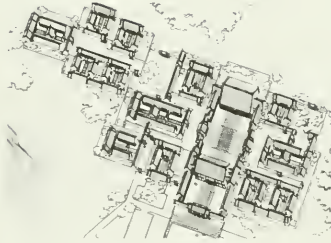
Two calligraphers, Lin Kwang-hao and Shen Ying-tung from Taipei conducted a week long workshop and demonstration from June 20 to 25 at China Showcase. Lin also demonstrated his unusual prowess of composing distiches at one minute each and with the audience's names imbedded in his lines.

PRESENTATION OF CHINESE CLASSIC DANCE

On July 16 and 17, 1983 two spectacular performances of Chinese classic and folk dances were staged at M.I.T.'s Kresge Auditorium. The Dance Company from Taipei was touring the U. S. and Central and South America. The CCI invited the company to Boston. Both shows were very well attended. Boston Globe Calendar listed it as a choice of the week before the shows and a good review appeared in the Art section afterwards. The great success made our effort well worthwhile.

SUMMER FESTIVALS

The summer was bookended by the Dragon Boat Festival on July 18th and the August Moon Festival on August 21. CCI played an important role behind the scenes in both.



CURRENT EXHIBITION AND ACTIVITIES

ARTISTS FROM CHINA: THE YOUNG GENERATION

This currently running exhibition (ends December 30, 1983) comprises works by eight young artists from Beijing (Peking), Shanghai and Guangzhou (Canton). Presently in their twenties, these artists embarked on their artistic careers only after the Cultural Revolution. Their oeuvre shows a marked difference from those produced seven years ago in China. This exhibition is important and interesting in that it allows us to capture a glimpse of the artistic trend in China.

These artists came to the United States recently to learn about Western styles and techniques first hand. In blending the East and the West, each of these artists strives to create a unique style of his or her own. This idea of "combining the best of the Chinese and of the West" was originated separately by two artists from Shanghai and Guangzhou in the 1920's. There have been many innovative works created under this principle.

TOURING AND PUBLICATION OF CHINESE IN MASSACHUSETTS

CCI has been awarded a grant by Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy to partially support the publication of *Chinese in Massachusetts: Their Experiences and Contributions* which is based on the highly acclaimed exhibition produced by CCI and funded in part also by the Massachusetts Foundation. A grant from the same Foundation has recently been awarded to CCI to convert the exhibition into a touring one. So far the exhibit has been booked by the World Affairs Council for February 1984, the University of Massachusetts in Amherst for September and October 1984, and Tufts University for November and December of 1984. Other dates are open. For more information please write or call the Institute at (617) 542-4599.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

CHINESE WOMEN OF AMERICA 1834-1982

To be presented from January 5 to March 10, 1984, this exhibition, sponsored by the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco, chronicles 150 years of the history of Chinese women in America. Through photographs and illustrations, the exhibition traces historical, social, and political events and issues which have affected Chinese-American women. This first-of-its-kind exhibition details the lives, struggles and achievements of Chinese-American women, emphasizing pioneers who withstood hardship and discrimination to make important contributions to their society. The exhibition offers a portrait of a group that has been challenged both as women and as members of a minority group. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.

EAST MEETS WEST: Architecture as a Means of Bi-Cultural Communication

This exhibition, scheduled for April 1984, will form a concise identification of the achievements of Chinese architects with Western training and of the Chinese-American architects in America. The major thematic emphasis will focus on how the bi-cultural backgrounds of architects and planners have influenced their work.

The exhibition will explore and expand on the adaptation of traditional planning theory and principles by a contemporary architectural design that is searching for a new vocabulary of contemporary Chinese architecture.

This will identify the bi-lateral influences and common features wherever East meets West. This will also entail an examination of the search for contemporary use of traditional language and how traditional symbolism and motif have been used in Western-style expressions.

In recognition of the support from CCI's Founding Members and Friends, we dedicate this first issue of the Bulletin to them. We would like to express our appreciation to Douglas Sun for his assistance in editing this issue.

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE of what will hopefully become a regular publication which will serve to report on the running and upcoming programs and activities. In addition we would like to use the Bulletin to establish a forum for idea exchange by soliciting essays on various interesting and/or polemical themes from our readers.

In this, the first issue, we have described the history of the Institute, and have identified its purposes and goals. We hope, in this way, to increase public understanding of the Institute and to expand membership. Your annual tax deductible membership fee will help the CCI to maintain the diversity and quality of its programs. We hope that you share our vision of promoting the understanding of Chinese culture and its meeting with the West from both Western and Eastern perspectives in the Boston-area and nationwide. If you are interested please complete the form and send it along with your comments and suggestions on our Bulletin and our programs to our office.

MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

As the Institute grows, we wish to share the excitement with more friends. Please join us. Your support is urgently needed. Patrons, sponsors and regular members are entitled to:

- free admission to our gallery, and reduced admission fees to special events;
- invitation to "Members Only" receptions;
- free subscription to the Bulletin;
- discount on books, catalogs and posters sold at the gallery;
- free access to CCI's cultural resources;
- reduced registration fees to CCI's language and art courses;
- use of CCI's galleries for special functions

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ART IN CHINA: 1949-1978

by Doris C. J. Chu

Art may be said to be a reflection of the social, political, and philosophical background at a given time. Romanesque art is a product of the supreme religious power of Christianity while Michelangelo's works express the spirit of a new era of humanists. For the same reason, Chinese landscape painting of the Sung period reflects Ch'an Buddhism and the Taoist philosophy; and the Yuan Dynasty witnessed the flourishing of Bamboo painting.

After the Opium War (1842), China lost confidence in her own traditional culture. Many people believed the only way to save China was to modernize, which means learning how to build steamships and artillery. The art circle also faced the great challenge of modernization and westernization. On the other hand they inherited the duty of transmitting and promoting a long and brilliant tradition. At the turn of the century numerous young artists went to study art in Japan and Europe. Upon their return, they brought with them a foreign painting style and an ambition to create "modern art" in China. They experimented with different western modes and expressed their theories in writings, labelling themselves Romantics, Realists, Classicists, Academicians, Impressionists, Post Impressionists, and even Fauves and Cubists. But their creation was nothing more than transplanting the European art to Chinese soil.

Among those artists returning from abroad, two figures merit special mentioning because of their conscious intention to reform Chinese painting and their tremendous influence on painting in China. They were Hsu Pei-hung (1895-1953) from Shanghai and Kao Chien-fu (1878-1951) from Canton. Their approach was to blend Chinese and western techniques and maintain the Chinese media of the brush, ink color and rice paper. Consequently, elements such as linear perspective, modeling, light and shade, volume and plane, were fused in their art. Attention was given to anatomy of figures and animals. Human

figures became more slender and the faces sometimes show Caucasian features.

Kao was more radical than Hsu in that he also adopted the idea of European Realism of the nineteenth century in choosing his subject matter. He strongly opposed the concept that art was a means for expressing personal feelings, and maintained that contemporary art should be based on the reality of life. One must be of one's time — a concept originated by Daumier.

Hsu won international recognition while exhibiting in Europe and Asia. He enjoyed very high esteem in China and had many students, followers and admirers. He held the post of President of the National Central Academy of Art in Peking for a number of years. After his death in 1953 his influence continued to be seen in the so-called "new-national painting" established during the Cultural Revolution.

Kao Chien-fu and his brother Kao Ch'ifeng founded the Ling-nan school. Their slogan which is still popular today is "to synthesize the best of China and the West." Works of the Ling-nan school are characterized by strong brush strokes and rich, bright colors. After the establishment of the new regime, systematic studies were made of this school. Its tradition has been carried on by several leading artists in China.

Despite their popularity, both Hsu and Kao were harshly criticized by some Chinese artists who believed that the best way to save Chinese painting from petrifying was to revive the creative spirit of the Sung and Yuan masters, instead of adopting foreign methods.

Like artists in China in the previous periods the painters of the first half of the twentieth century belonged to the respected intellectual class. They felt little social or political pressure and had complete freedom to paint and teach in whatever way they chose. This was not because the government authorities were understanding and liberal but because the Kuomintang (Nationalist) leaders had inherited the traditional Chinese concept that art was for the pleasure of the intellectual or leisure class and did not realize the importance of making good use of the writers and artists for their political ends.

The climate changed drastically along with the political change of 1949. The new

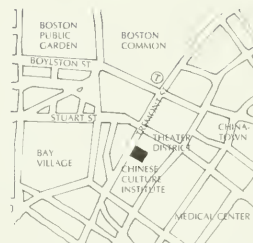
regime put the intellectual class under tight ideological control. The artists went through strict thought reform. Mao Tse-tung's principles and policies toward art and literature were the yardsticks for measuring what was acceptable. Non-conformists would be sent off to remote areas for long periods of time to engage in physical labor.

It would be interesting to know what are Mao Tse-tung's principles and policies toward arts and literature. Mao had said at the Yen'an "Forum on Literature and Art" on May 22 and 23, 1942, that "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to a certain class and are geared to a definite political line. There is in fact no such a thing as 'art for art's sake.' Art that stands above class or art that is detached from or independent of politics does not exist." (Author's translation.) He clearly stated in his lecture that literature and art should be a part of the political mechanism, and that they should "operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for the attacking and the destroying of the enemy. . . ." He emphasized that art should be directed only at an audience of workers, peasants and soldiers and that art should only depict the life of the people. He also stressed that it was "wrong to depart from this policy and anything at variance with it must be duly corrected."

What kinds of subject matter and styles, one may wonder, were accepted by the regime during the years between 1949 to 1976? The first few years after the establishment of the regime, painting in the traditional Chinese style was almost completely wiped out, especially the great tradition of landscape painting which was criticized because it smacked of abstraction and of "bourgeois formalism," and its traditional association with a small and highly privileged class of literati and officials. In 1950, Chiang Feng, the Director of the Eastern China Branch of the National Central Academy of Art prescribed a formula for Chinese artists: "From now on, there will be only oil painting of a cosmopolitan nature," he said. For the first few years, oil painting in the Russian inspired Socialist-Realist style became the official mode. In addition, paper-cutting, "new-year picture" and woodcut, since they were the art of the common

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people, were allowed to flourish. Woodcut which had been a tool of propaganda for the Chinese Communist party since the 1940's, was particularly encouraged.

During this period oil painting was mainly used for portraiture of the party leaders and people's heroes, and for the official commemorative canvases. Other major subjects were the history of the Party, the fighting of the anti-Japanese War, the "liberation of the cities," and "the Long March." There are many large sized battle scenes involving a great number of figures and weapons, and a violent turbulence which vaguely echoes European Romantic battle scenes of the early nineteenth century. Around the mid-1950's, subjects had broadened to include lives of the populace with special emphasis on socialist morality: For instance, a group of peasants chatting, smoking and warming themselves up in front of a fire is clearly a genre scene of peasants enjoying their evening after a day's work. But such a painting has been entitled *A Small Group Meeting* to justify its existence. For the same token, a young man rowing a boat with his father as the passenger is titled *Sending Military Provision*.

During the 1960's, efforts were made to "nationalize" oil painting — to give oil painting a Chinese characteristic or flavor. Clumps of trees, bowing bamboo, jagged rocks, precipices, abrupt peaks now clear now obscure in a luminous expanse of mist often found in those "nationalized" oil paintings are adaptations from traditional painting.

1953 to 1957 was a period of liberalization when the older artists gradually revived many of the traditional styles and themes of Chinese painting. Pure landscapes, birds, and flowers, love scenes derived from classical novels were painted in the refined academic style (kung-pi), idealizing style (Hsieh-i) or in the modes of the literati painters (Wen-jen hua).

The two dominating trends during this period of liberalization, however, were set by the concepts set forth earlier by Hsu Pei-hung in Peking and Ling-nan school founded by Kao Chien-fu in Canton. Hsu himself, however, was sent to a labor reform camp, where he eventually died in 1953, because his painting had been criticized as containing many "bourgeois ele-

ments." Despite that, Hsu's theory of synthesizing Chinese and Western techniques was accepted by the government authorities and became the basis of the so-called "new-national-painting." The promoter of this new form was Chiang Feng who succeeded Hsu as the Director of the Central Academy of Art in Peking. Through his encouragement, works in this form approach the feelings of Western watercolor or oil painting. The subtle quality of brush and ink highly valued in traditional painting were ignored and the spirit of Chinese painting was lost. Some painters of the Ling-nan school while following Kao Chien-fu's theory of syncretism and depicting socialist reality retained much of the aesthetic principles of traditional painting.

In the second part of 1957, however, the Party tightened its control over the content and form of art. Many of the old subjects were once again repudiated. In order to give vent to one's free artistic expression, the artists painted two kinds of works, one for official showing and the other for self enjoyment and for selling. The February 1964 issue of *Mei-shu pan yueh k'an* (Arts Bi-monthly) featured an article complaining that: "some artists showed very good works in official exhibitions in which they devotedly promoted socialist principles. Other works by these artists shown at Yung Pao Tsai (a well known art shop in Peking), however, displayed a completely different trait. Not only did they not propagate socialism, but they also tended to spread unhealthy ideology."

During the Cultural Revolution, a more drastic change may be observed in the "national painting." Traditional Chinese media were made to do what they were never meant to do. For instance the fluidity and transparency of Chinese ink and light color wash were forced unsuccessfully to depict the weight and solidity of cement and steel. Figurative works were aimed at praising "positive heroes" of the peasants, workers, and soldiers. Landscape works were used to emphasize human power and bravery. Illustrations of Mao Tse-tung's poems formed another major category of paintings. "Healthy and Correct Ideology" was the focal point.

After the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976 and the removal of the Gang of Four from

power in 1978, the period of radical revolutionary spirit was put to an end. A new era of "Hundred Flowers Bloom" was ushered in by policies of modernization and production. People began to enjoy the taste of freedom. Art and literature, always sensitive to the changing climate, reflected this new spirit clearly.

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